

ORGANIZED LABOR FROM THE WAGNER ACT, 1935,
TO THE TAFT-HARTLEY LAW, 1947

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 1970

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the American economy, similar to that of all other Western nations, was essentially agrarian. A good deal of farm work was associated with and dependent upon agriculture. Crafts and trades were dominated by guild-like organizations. The rest of the working force was limited to day labor or mill work available in the infant industries.

The early mills and factories with their small windows and lack of sanitary conditions were unhealthy places in which to work. Legislation to protect the welfare of the workers did not exist. Everywhere the worker was entirely dependent upon the will of the employer. As the nation's economy expanded the wage earners became increasingly dissatisfied with their lot and began to search for effective means of bettering their conditions of employment. They began to organize.¹

The earliest labor organization in America took a form known as the craft local union. The unions were limited in scope and restricted to specific trades in specific localities. Their purpose was the

¹Merle Fainsod, Lincoln Gordon and Joseph C. Palamountain, Jr., Government and the American Economy (3rd.ed.; New York: N. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1959), pp.4-5.

protection of the interests of their members. These interests included wages, hours and conditions of work as well as the care of the indigent members. In a sense they were benevolent societies. They provided benefit payments for insurances, illnesses, funerals and burials. As the intensity of the economic struggle with the employers increased, these benevolent features, although retained in most of the unions, became secondary to collective bargaining.¹

By 1820, the growth of industry, the influx of people moving to the cities and the development of transportation facilities had progressed sufficiently to enable local unions of various crafts to unite in city associations and to organize national craft unions.² The factory system appeared at a time when both farmers and independent journeymen found the demands of labor were increasingly harder.

The first public manifestations of organized labor actually occurred in western Massachusetts. Farming and sheep-raising had been marginal activities, and the rising prices with the loss of labor to the mills were evident. There was a spontaneous formation of workingmen's groups with platforms revolving around the issues of status, free from class appeals or disagreements concerning the economy.

During 1830, in eastern Massachusetts, small mechanics and workers with feelings over their role in an industrialized future, began to form

¹E. E. Cummins, The Labor Problems in the United States (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1932), pp. 163-64.

²Florence Peterson, American Labor Union (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), p. 45.

urban chapters of the Workingmen's Party.¹ In sharing the interests and objectives of the middle class, the Workingmen drew their support from the broad stratum of society ranging from wage earners to the professions.

Jacksonian Democracy gave encouragement to organized labor in the period between 1830 and 1848. By 1850, the slavery controversy had overshadowed all other social and economic issues in the country. Thus, on the eve of the Civil War, organized labor activity in the United States went into an eclipse.²

It was the Union's victory in the Civil War that provided, among other things, the necessary incentive for labor to organize on a national scale. The victory provided a tremendous stimulus to industry; it brought to the national leadership the Republican Party which largely represented the economic interests of Northern industry. The defeat of the South meant the end of strong agrarian opposition to such business objectives as the high protective tariff and other measures such as grants of land to promote the expansion of railroads.³

In 1866, the National Labor Union was established and William H. Sylvis was made president. The National Labor Union sought to provide the basis for a national craft union organization. In 1872 it became a political party and when its presidential candidate withdrew,

¹Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946), pp. 148-49.

²Walter Hugins, Jacksonian Democracy and the Working Class (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 11-12.

³John E. Maher, Labor and the Economy (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965), p. 43.

the organization collapsed.¹

In 1869, Uriah S. Stevens, a Philadelphia garment maker, along with several fellow workers, organized the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor. This was a semi-secret organization. It attempted to organize men and women of every craft, creed and color. It included both skilled and unskilled workers.² The main principle on which the Knights stood was cooperation: a cooperation of various crafts for the purpose of securing higher wages and better working conditions for themselves. The Knights accepted everyone for membership except lawyers, bankers, stockholders and professional gamblers.³

The wide use of machinery and the numerous divisions of labor threatened the economic position of a number of the crafts. Further complicating the problem was the large number of immigrant workers who were willing to work for extremely low wages. Many of the immigrants were imported by employers' associations or large corporations seeking cheap labor, and, in some cases, they were used as strikebreakers. The craft unions sought nationwide organization to distinguish themselves from the unskilled and semiskilled workers and to protect the standards of their trade.

Another factor that promoted national unions was the traveling

¹Arthur D. Butler, Labor Economics and Institutions (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), pp. 47-48.

²Frank T. Carlton, The History and Problems of Organized Labor (New York: D. C. Heath and Company, 1920), p. 72.

³Arthur J. Goldberg, AFL-CIO Labor United (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), p. 19.

journeyman. These working people were searching for the high wage paying cities. Some control was necessary to keep them from leaving the smaller cities for the larger ones. This would have to be done through uniform rules and administered in a manner by which all locals were dealt with.¹

When Samuel Gompers became president of the American Federation of Labor, the Knights of Labor had already passed the height of their power and influence but remained an important factor in the labor movement for the next ten years. At the AFL convention in 1886, Gompers accused the Knights of Labor Executive Board of selling out the interests of the workers. When Gompers looked back on the strikes that had taken place, he felt that the Executive Board had consistently agreed to the demands of the employers. Gompers held many conferences but a plan of unification could not be drawn up since the delegates were not empowered to do more than make recommendations.

Later, Gompers was convinced that further attempts to try to keep the Knights of Labor together was useless. Some of the representatives declared after the conference that they would not abide by the resolution but would deal directly with the national and international trade unions. The Knights of Labor had rapidly declined and many segments were going over to the American Federation of Labor.²

Industrialization spurred the local unions' growth of a federation. Out of a group of dissatisfied members of the Knights of Labor arose the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions. The

¹Ibid., p. 20.

²Bernard Mandel, Samuel Gompers (Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1963), pp. 78-79.

Federation called upon all unions not members of the Knights of Labor to join them for protection against the Knights. The new group ultimately took the name "The American Federation of Labor" and its chief sponsor was Gompers. Gompers was born in London, the son of a Jewish cigar maker. Similar to most trade unionists, there was little in the philosophy of the Knights of Labor that he could accept. He did not believe in semi-secret organizations or the rituals conducted at their meetings.¹

It was Gompers and his close associates who laid down the basic philosophy of the American Federation of Labor. They thought the government should serve as an umpire in labor relations and in the maintenance of order, but should not interfere in industrial relations nor the internal affairs of labor or business. Gompers was so opposed to government intervention in labor disputes until he was not willing to accept government facilities and assistance for mediation and voluntary arbitration. He thought such intervention might lead to compulsory arbitration and that government aid would lead to government control and dictation.²

The AFL was to serve as a clearinghouse for the operation of craft unions. It encouraged unorganized skilled and semiskilled workers to join national trade unions.³

In 1905, however, Gompers stated publicly that the masses of unskilled labor could not be organized. He blamed this on their lack

¹Ibid., pp. 61-62.

²Gordan F. Bloom and Herbert R. Northrup, Economics Labor Relations (5th ed.; Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irvin, Inc., 1963), p. 52.

³Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labour (New York: Augustus Kelly, 1967), p. 375.

of intelligence; he also felt that women should not be wage earners. The wife as a wage earner was a disadvantage economically and should be excluded from industrial employment as much as possible. Gompers supported a union in Massachusetts which forced women out of the core-making trade on the grounds that their employment at that work was degrading to womanhood.¹

Booker T. Washington, the Negro spokesman and educator, charged that the craft unions were hindering the advancement of Negroes by failing to organize them. Gompers was also criticized by William E. B. DuBois for ignoring the protests of Negro workers.²

In view of the AFL's position that all skilled workers should be organized, it faced the necessity of providing a place for black workers employed in crafts or industries in which unions would not admit Negroes. Thus, authority was given to the AFL's Executive Council in 1902 to set up central labor unions, local unions, or national labor unions composed exclusively of Negro workers.³

Gompers finally concluded that although it was better for the labor movement to organize all workers regardless of race, creed, or color, it was preferable to organize white and black workers into separate unions than not to organize them at all.⁴

¹Roy Marshall, The Negro and Organized Labor (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 20.

²Ibid., p. 21.

³Philip Taft, Organized Labor in American History (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 669.

⁴Marshall, op.cit., p.21.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century the courts had recognized the right of labor to organize unions. The most effective weapon which management was able to utilize to restrain actions by the unions was the injunction.¹ The second most effective device was the yellow-dog contract. This was an agreement between employers and the workers by which the employees agreed to not join an independent union. The workers could agree to join a company union; they could agree to not go out on strike; they could agree to not engage in agitation for a union; they could even agree to not read union literature. The employees were able to keep their jobs and the agreement was to last for the duration of their employment.²

Big business was to rely very heavily upon the injunction, the yellow-dog contract and even violence to combat the great national strikes that began to plague the country after 1890.

In 1892, at Homestead, Pennsylvania, the workers of the Carnegie Steel Company, members of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers refused to accept new wage cuts.³ The company's general manager, who was the tough-minded, stubbornly anti-labor, Henry Clay Frick, suddenly closed down the entire plant and refused any further negotiations with the union. Frick had hired special deputy sheriffs to guard company property in addition to three hundred Pinkerton detectives to be located on barges in the Ohio River. The strikers set

¹George W. Taylor, Government Regulation of Industrial Relations (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), p. 292.

²Emanuel Stein, Labor Problems in America (New York: Farrar-Rinehart, Inc., 1940), pp. 515-16.

³Leon Wolff, Lockout (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), pp. 26-29.

up a small firing line behind several railroad ties. When the strikers fired at the Pinkerton detectives, but failed to sink the barge, they poured oil in the river and set it afire. The Pinkertons surrendered and came ashore. A few days later, the state militia placed eight thousand strong men to guard the city. The plant was reopened with militia protection and non-union men were given the Amalgamated members' jobs. The strike was finally broken.¹

Following the panic of 1893, there occurred the Pullman strike in Pullman, Illinois, which was one of the most costly and complex labor struggles in the country's history. In June, 1894, employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company struck in protest against a 25 to 40 percent cut in wage and living conditions in their company-dominated town. Earlier these workers had joined the American Railway Union, an industrial union of railroad workers that had been organized by Eugene Debs. Becoming dissatisfied with the timidity and caution of the Railroad Brotherhood, Debs ordered a boycott against all Pullman cars.

The strike interfered with transportation of the United States mail and interstate commerce. Federal attorneys obtained a court injunction restraining the strikes from obstructing the railways. On July 4, a regiment of troops were dispatched to every point in the state where the authorities called for them. The federal troops were called to break the strike, not to preserve order. Debs and other strike leaders were ultimately sentenced to prison for violating the injunctions. The Pullman strike was the first major industrial dispute

¹ Foster Rhea Dulles, Labor in America (wrd ed.; New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1966), pp. 166-67.

in which organized labor felt the full power of the courts. Efforts to limit the use of injunctions in labor disputes were finally successful when Congress passed the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act, March 23, 1932.¹

The Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act was enacted by a Democratic-controlled House of Representatives and a Republican Senate. The two men initiating the act were Congressman Fiorello Henry LaGuardia, liberal Republican from New York, and Republican Senator George William Norris of Nebraska.² The Act of 1932 restricted the power of the federal courts to issue injunctions in labor disputes and also put an end to yellow-dog contracts by declaring that they were enforceable in the federal courts.³

¹Ibid., pp. 173, 179, 197.

²Leon Witmack, Norris-LaGuardia Act, 1932 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 115.

³Ibid., p. 116.

CHAPTER II

LABOR UNDER THE NEW DEAL

The National Industrial Recovery Act

When Franklin D. Roosevelt went into office on March 4, 1933, his stirring inaugural address held out a promise of action to cope with the national emergency. His address created a feeling of hope and confidence throughout the nation. The primary task was to put people to work. The appearance of the New Deal aided in the growth of the labor movement. Greater gains were to be won by wage earners than in any previous period in history.

The National Industrial Recovery Act, June 16, 1933, was the first of many of the New Deal enactments designed to lift the nation out of the depression.¹ In providing for codes of fair competition, the act stipulated that approval of any code required compliance with Section 7(a) of the act. It stated:

(1) That employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference, restraint, or coercion of employers of labor, of their agents, in the designation of such representatives or in self-organization or in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection;

(2) That no employee and no one seeking employment shall be required as a condition of employment to join any company

¹Stephen J. Mueller and A. Howard Myers, Labor Law and Legislation (3rd ed.: Chicago: South-Western Publishing Co., 1962), p. 329.

union or to refrain from joining organizing or assisting a labor organization....¹

The National Industrial Recovery Act was enthusiastically accepted by labor, industry and consumer during its two years of life but the United States Supreme Court was of a different mind. It declared the act unconstitutional in 1935 because it attempted to regulate hours and wages of workers in intrastate business, an invalid exercise of federal power. The labor provision, Section 7(a) of the National Industrial Recovery Act was vital to the New Deal. So the Democratic Congress in 1935 hastened to preserve that provision in a new national labor law.

National Labor Relations Act

The National Labor Relations Act was introduced in Congress by Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York.² President Roosevelt signed the act on July 5, 1935, with hopes that the act would give labor sufficient strength to recover from the effects of the depression and lessen the causes of labor disputes burdening and obstructing interstate and foreign commerce.³ The act went beyond Section 7(a) of the National Industrial Recovery Act in its effort to provide effective protection for the rights of labor.

In approving the act on July 5, 1935, the President declared:

A better relationship between labor and management is high purpose of this Act, and peace in labor relations is and must

¹Ibid., p. 330.

²Irving Bernstein, The New Deal Collective Bargaining Policy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), p. 127.

³"National Labor Relations Act, 1947," Monthly Labor Review, XCI (August, 1935), 367.

be the objective of management and labor alike if there is to be any return of business and prosperity. It is highly important that not only management and labor, the active partner in this most delicate and explosive human relationship, but the public as well, should know and understand the meaning of the law and its working.¹

In the act, Congress declared as follows:

Employers shall have the right to self organization, form, join or assist labor organization through choosing, and to engage in concerted activities, for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.

It further stated that it was unfair labor practice for an employer to interfere with employees in guaranteeing their rights as it was mentioned in Section 7. It was also unfair practice for employers to control or interfere with the organizing of any labor organization or contribute financially or any other support to it. The act was also designed to prevent employers from refusing to employ or discharge any person for a job or presently employed worker because of his membership in any union or if he expressed a desire to join one.² In other words, the Wagner Act intended to establish collective bargaining for employees as soon as possible.³

Several unfair labor practices were defined in the act. Organized labor numbered only four million members, mostly concentrated in the construction trades, transportation, mining and needle trades. In

¹Thomas H. Slusser, A Practical View of the National Labor Relations Act and Its Administration (Chicago: The Cuneo Press, Inc., 1939), p. 98.

²Charles O. Gregory, Labor and the Law (2nd ed.; New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1961), pp. 230-31.

³Max S. Wortman, Jr., and C. Wilson Randle, Collective Bargaining (2nd ed.; Boston: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 115.

1935, industries such as steel, agricultural tools, petroleum refining, rubber products, electrical machinery and meat packing had from 50 to 80 percent of their employees covered by company unions.¹

Employers were very hostile to unions and used every weapon to prevent union organization. Lockouts, intimidation, black lists, yellow-dog contracts, spying and discrimination were very common. The LaFollette Committee investigation of industrial espionage reported that 1,475 companies were clients of detective agencies during the years 1933 to 1936. Expenditures on espionage, arms and strikebreaking in about three hundred companies in 1930-1937 amounted to nearly \$9.5 million.²

National Labor Relations Board

The administration of the Wagner Act was placed in the hands of the National Labor Relations Board. The board was composed of three members, with the authority to determine the appropriate bargaining unit and to supervise the elections where employees chose their exclusive representatives for dealing with employers. The board could also hear complaints of unfair labor practices and petition the courts for enforcement of its orders. The National Labor Relations Board was not concerned with the disputes over wages and hours, but only the

¹H. A. Millis and E. C. Brown, From the Wagner Act to Taft-Hartley: A Study of National Labor Policy and Labor Relations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 110.

²LaFollette Committee Reports, Industrial Espionage, Report No. 46, Part 3, 75th Congress, 2d session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 16, 1937), pp. 26, 89.

practical encouragement and facilitation of collective bargaining.¹

The Wagner Act has been characterized as the workers' Magna Carta. Congress had stated that the workers' individual bargaining was hopeless and ineffective when placed against a giant corporate enterprise; therefore, a principal objective of the act was to encourage collective bargaining. It was thought that collective bargaining would eliminate low wages and poor working conditions. Wages, hours and other conditions of employment would be established by mutual consent rather than by the employer's determination. Effective collective bargaining could develop only when employees had been given the right to join unions and to engage in specific activities. These rights were enumerated in Section 7.²

Expansion of the Power of Organized Labor

Despite widespread opposition and evasion of the labor provisions of the National Labor Relations Act, that act provided a major stimulus to organized labor. It was extremely significant to note that the growth of industrial unions was based on the shop rather than the craft; that unions included all workers in a factory rather than separate unions for different types of workers. Many labor leaders believed that there was a greater strength in one large union than in separating workers in a factory into different craft unions.³

¹Dulles, op. cit., p. 277.

²Lois MacDonald, "The National Labor Relations Act," American Economic Review, XXVI (March, 1936), 412-14.

³Everett Johnson Burt, Jr., Labor Markets, Unions, and Government Policies (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), pp. 98-99.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the labor movement in the New Deal period was its growth and expansion. The New Deal needed organized labor to break the grip of the Great Depression. Three months after Roosevelt became president, the National Industrial Recovery Act passed and set up the National Recovery Act. On the Labor Advisory Board of the National Recovery Act, the President appointed John L. Lewis, Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, George L. Berry of the Printing Pressmen, and William Green, president of The American Federation of Labor.¹

The struggle of the nation's factory workers to achieve organization occurred mainly between 1935 and 1937. Meetings were held in convention halls and council rooms of the AFL in major industrial cities such as Pittsburgh, Chicago, Gary, Detroit, Flint, Pontiac, Akron and others.²

The AFL met in a historic session in Atlantic City in 1935. The Executive Council had granted an industrial charter to all automobile workers, with the exception of those engaged in the manufacturing of auto parts and in skilled jobs. The Council had established many new federal local unions in auto parts, gasoline stations, in rubber, aluminum, radio, cement, gas and by-product coke. There were no plans for granting to the rubber workers a real industrial charter. Finally, due to the internal difficulties within the Amalgamated Associated of Iron,

¹Benjamin Stolberg, The Story of the C.I.O. (New York: Viking Press, 1938), p.16.

²Milton Derber and Edwin Young, Labor and the New Deal (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 10.

Steel and Tin Workers, the Council did not think it wise to begin an organizing campaign for unskilled workers in industry.¹

However, the division over the craft-industrial issue could no longer be compromised within the AFL conventions. Conflict broke out in the open. The resolutions committee gave the majority and minority reports on the issue. John P. Frey, president of the Metal Trades Department, presented the majority report. It criticized the industrial union exponents for their apparent disregard of their previous compromise. Frey spoke very strongly that the compromise did not authorize the granting of unrestricted industrial union charters in the mass production industries, all it did was to differentiate between "craftsmen" and "mass production workers."²

The minority report was presented by Charles P. Howard. The main issue of the minority report was that many of the charters that were craft international unions had been granted at a time when the skills demanded by mass production industry were unknown. If these workers were to be successfully organized, there must be a clear understanding that the AFL would recognize the right of those workers to organize into industrial unions and be granted unrestricted charters which guaranteed the right to accept into membership all workers employed in the industry or establishment without fear of being compelled to destroy unit of action through recognition of jurisdictional claims made by national or international unions. The minority group made

¹Stolberg, op. cit., p. 22.

²Goldberg, op. cit., p. 34.

known it had no intentions to deprive the craft international of the jurisdiction which properly belonged to them.¹

Lewis, who defended the minority report, was so angry that he became involved in a fist fight on the floor of the convention with William S. Hutcherson, president of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.² Lewis knew that more than one third of the convention votes and a large number of the rank and file membership of the AFL unions wanted steel, automobiles, rubber and cement and textiles organized and if forming industrial unions was the method for such organizing, he could count on their support. The workers felt that Lewis was willing to assist them in organizing unions of their choosing.³

The immediate cause of the split between the AFL and the CIO was a serious one. There was the conflict of craft with the needs of mass industry, where craft counted less. At the same time, it is difficult to say that the split would have taken place if William Green, president of the AFL, had been a more powerful president.

Because of the urgency of organizing the unorganized in the basic industries of America, the Committee for Industrial Organization was formed. It was for the purpose of encouraging and promoting organization workers in a mass production and other industries upon an industrial basis. It aimed to foster recognition and acceptance of collective

¹Ibid., p. 35.

²Louis Stark, "Fist Fight Puts A.F. of L. in Uproar," New York Times, October 20, 1935, p. 22.

³Derber and Young, op. cit., p. 59.

bargaining in basic industries and counsel and advise unorganized and newly organized groups of workers; and to bring them in affiliation with the American Federation of Labor as industrial organizations.¹

Lewis and his fellowmen met immediately after the adjournment of the convention and began the formation of a Committee for Industrial Organization. The Committee membership included John L. Lewis as chairman, Charles P. Howard, secretary, and John Brophy as director. Other members were Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, David Dubinsky of the Ladies Garment Workers, Thomas McMahon, president of the United Textile Workers, Harvey Fremming, president of the Oil Workers, Max Laritsky, president of the Cap and Millinery Workers, and Thomas H. Brown, president of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.²

The growth of the membership in the CIO was tremendous. Two years after the organization had started, there were 32 organizations with a membership of 3,750,000. It had raised wages by \$1,000,000,000 a year, cut hours 2,000,000 a week and also improved working conditions. The CIO had organized 75 percent of the steel industry, 70 percent of the automobile industry, 65 percent of the rubber industry and about one third of the maritime and textile industries, and constantly added organizations in new fields such as public utilities, meat packing, toy and furniture industries. Thus, the CIO revamped American labor from

¹Ibid., p. 29.

²Committee for Industrial Organization, Industrial Unionism (Washington, D.C., 1935), p.5.

craft unions into modern industrial unionism.¹

The struggle for rights for Negroes had become affected by the atmosphere of intolerance that stifled the AFL. However, one of the first or big efforts of the CIO was to smash open the gates of organized labor for the Negro workers. Many hundreds of thousands of Negro workers poured into the steel, auto, packinghouse, maritime and other unions and, as a result, the AFL was forced to liberalize its policy towards Negroes. The CIO also showed some progress in the advancement of Negroes to leadership in unions by electing them to top offices. The United Steelworkers had the bulk of the Negro workers in their union, making up about one fifth of the union's membership.²

The improvement in the position of Negroes in the labor movement since 1935 had been the results of several conditions. The CIO unions had required the practice of anti-exclusion policies for their locals. The CIO unions' policies were based in part on a real desire to eliminate race prejudice.³

Women had become a significant segment of the labor force only in more recent decades. The AFL was a man's organization, composed mostly of skilled craftsmen. However, the growing mechanization of industrial processes and the accompanying increases in the competitive employment of women led to the use of paid organizers at different times for the purpose of forming women's locals or bringing them into existing unions

¹Ibid., pp. 28-29.

²George Morris, Where is the CIO Going? (New York City: New Century Publishers, March, 1949), pp. 19-21.

³Carrol R. Daughtery, The Labor Problems of American Society (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), pp. 284-85.

of male wage earners. The unionization of women workers before World War II came from the CIO, whose unions practiced the principle of including these employees. Unionism was so long taking hold among women workers because of the attitude of male unionists and policies of their unions toward female employers.

By the end of 1937, the percentage of organizations in clothing manufacture had risen considerably. Almost half the workers in the industry were on payrolls which had less than two hundred and fifty employees. In 1937, there were about 158,000 wage earners employed in the industry, of whom slightly more than half were women.

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, under the leadership of Sidney Hillman, was one of the founding unions of the CIO and remained loyal to it until the final merger with the AFL.

The Amalgamated entered the laundry industry with its first activities in New York City and nearby cities. Most laundry workers were semiskilled or unskilled and many of them were Negroes, unable to secure work in higher paying occupations. Wages were very low--\$15.00 a week was thought of as good earnings--and the workers were often obliged to work up to 70 hours a week to achieve that level.¹

¹Walter Galenson, The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935-1941 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 285-86.

CHAPTER III

POST WORLD WAR II STRIKES

With the end of World War II, national strikes of larger proportions were called as the unions made efforts to catch up with the lag in wages resulting from wartime restraints on wage increases. These postwar strikes demonstrated the power of the new industrial unions.¹ Widespread discontent existed over rising prices and bitter criticism was directed against Congress for failure to act. The unorganized consumers had little influence.

In a demand for wage increases adequate to meet the rising prices, thousands of strikes were called in the last half of 1945 and 1946. The year 1946 turned out to be one of the stormiest in American labor history. There were 4,700 strikes involving 4,700,000 workers. This wave of strikes was led by some of the CIO unions in such mass production industries as automobile manufacturing, electric equipment; meat packing and steel were generally successful in achieving wage increases. Continued rising prices quickly threw the 1946 wage scales out of line.²

Organized labor also pointed out that it had been the chief group to oppose ending controls after the war. Wage earners maintained that the profits of industry were so large that wages could be increased

¹Goldberg, op. cit., p. 44.

²Harold Faulkner, American Economic History (8th ed.; New York Harper and Row Publishers, 1954), p. 718.

without raising the retail price of the product. In any event, workers insisted that they could protect themselves against inflation only by higher wages and, if necessary, strikes to obtain them. Although unions had grown in number and in strength during the war and in their ability to obtain higher wages, their position in other ways had declined.¹

The Republican Party had won control of Congress in the mid-term election of 1946. The AFL and the CIO had supported the Roosevelt candidacy since 1936, as had the American Labor Party and the Liberal Party, whose backing came largely from labor. It seemed very evident that the majority of organized workers had thrown in their lot with the Democrats.²

During World War II, the United Automobile Workers pledged to the government its no-strike policy until the end of the fighting. The workers felt that they were at war and they should take the position that the needs of the country should be met first. Any strike would weaken the war effort and would lay the labor movement open to attacks by its enemies. At some of the union's wartime conventions, delegates gave vent to their discontent but a few people, including the dynamic leader of the union, Walter Reuther, kept them under control.

After V-J Day, President Truman noticed the desires of the workers for higher wages. He permitted rises in pay where they would not increase prices. Two days later, Reuther, as director of the General Motors

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 719.

union's division, wrote to the corporation's president, C. E. Wilson, asking for 30 percent wage increase without price rises. Six weeks later, the corporation refused to comply. Reuther began to publicize the financial reasons for General Motors' ability to pay.

After a month of negotiations between union representatives and corporation officials, the best offer General Motors would make was an increase of 10 percent if it could obtain higher prices. The union rejected the proposal. Reuther called a strike on November 21, which lasted 113 days. Because of the stand he took for the workers, he became president of the United Auto Workers.

To gain public favor, Reuther persuaded a group of fourteen outstanding citizens to study the union's negotiations with General Motors and make a decision. Their verdict was favorable and was widely publicized. Finally, on January 10, 1946, there was a wage increase of 19½ cents an hour without price increase; Reuther finally accepted the offer.¹

Numerous strikes occurred in the nation because employees claimed that living costs had continued to rise. In the steel strike of 1946, the union demanded that President Truman establish a new wage-price policy. At the end of the war, the cutbacks of production to forty hours a week had reduced the take-home pay for thousands of union members. The union's demand of 25 cents an hour increase was denied by the company.

The union called upon the National Labor Relations Board to take

¹Madison, op.cit., pp. 391, 393.

a strike vote. The workers supported their officers to strike by a vote of 411,401 to 83,859. The steel strike was set for January 14, 1946.

The steel companies were uncertain how they could pay any such wage increase as that demanded by the workers and asked for some assurance of a substantial price increase from the Office of Price Administration. The OPA refused to make such a guarantee to the steel companies.¹

President Truman attempted to break this deadlock by proposing a compromise offer of 18.5 cents an hour. The union accepted and agreed to postpone strike action until President Benjamin Fairless of United States Steel had had time to consult with the associates of his own company and the other companies that were affected. The industry did not accept the offer and the big strike began on January 21, 1946.

Over 750,000 workers were involved and only a few plants with union contracts were able to operate. The usual charges and counter-chargers were hurled back and forth, but violence did not occur. At one plant, there was a problem of mass picketing in which the state court took a hand, issuing an injunction to stop the practice. At another plant, there was considerable discussion about allowing maintenance workers in the plant. Finally, the companies agreed that they would not attempt to operate and the union would not try to keep out any maintenance men even if they were non-union.²

¹Colston E. Warne, ed., Labor in Postwar America (New York: Remsen Press, 1949), pp. 388-89.

²Ibid., p. 390.

Meanwhile, the President appointed a fact-finding committee as he had done for other major disputes, but it soon became evident that the lack of any definite wage-price policy was as much for the continuation of the strike as anything else. On January 24, Fairless said that government had offered an increase in the price of steel of over \$4 a ton, but this was not sufficient.¹ Irving S. Olds, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the United Steel Corporation, demanded a price rise of \$6.25 a ton. He felt it would be needed to compensate for the 18.5 cents an hour rise in wages suggested by President Truman. By February 15, the union and the corporation had agreed, after the company was granted a \$5 a ton price increase, to a raise of 18.5 cents an hour.²

The coal strike of 1946 was called a national disaster. President Truman wanted a showdown with John L. Lewis of the striking United Mine Workers and the soft-coal operators. There were 400,000 United Mine Workers who agreed with Lewis to strike, even though it meant weeks of idleness and a strain on the pocketbook.

Their leader stood firm on his demand for a health and welfare fund to be drawn from royalties on mined tonnage and administered solely by the union. There were other questions Lewis wanted settled but he thought it best to take them in order of importance.³

Congressman A. Willis Robertson from Virginia pushed his bill

¹Ibid.

²Taft, op. cit., p. 572.

³Warne, op. cit. p. 372.

making it illegal for unions to demand the type of royalty sought by Lewis. Senator Scott Lucas of Illinois termed Lewis as being drunk with power and urged federal seizure of the mines.

Throughout the country, thousands were made idle as industrial plants began to close down. In prolonging the coal strike, Lewis played for bigger pay for his miners. The existing wage ceiling of approximately 18.5 cents an hour above wartime levels was won by the CIO through its midwinter strikes. Lewis felt if he could win an increase in pay and royalties which exceeded 18.5 cents, he would have advanced a long step toward his goal of better protection for the workers.¹

Public utilities were also dependent on the use of coal and could not operate until the demand was supplied. When stocks are low, electric power companies seek to conserve the supply of power for the most essential uses.² The Civilian Production Administration ordered dimouts for twenty-one states in the fall of the 1946 strike. Later the Civilian Production Administration ordered Eastern utilities to substitute other fuels, interchange power and establish curtailment programs. During the spring of the 1946 strike when there was less than a twenty-eight-day supply of coal for power companies, public authorities ordered a compulsory dimout for sixty-four Virginia counties, but only a voluntary dimout for Philadelphia and New York.³

¹Warne, op. cit., p. 453.

²Neil Chamberlain, The Impact of Strikes (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1947), p. 63.

³Ibid.

Numerous strikes in the United States tended toward the need for further legislation. Since the passage of the Wagner Act, the increase in strikes was due to a number of factors. Unions through their large increase in members had become powerful enough to hold out for their demands. The increase in the number of workers increased the number of potential strikers. Unions learned, under federal regulations of wages, that they could usually win a strike in which the government controlled the settlement. Issues resulting in strikes usually involved wages and working conditions. There were still some strikes over union representation but not so many as before the Wagner Act. Organized labor's drive for union security through the closed shop and maintenance of membership had become an important issue. A number of proposals had been offered. Arbitration of disputes involving the public interest was proposed. It was also argued that the Wagner Act should be amended to give employers equal rights with unions. These and other issues were discussed in the 80th Congress.¹

In addition to strikes, labor was plagued by union racketeering.² The methods of racketeering were many, such as terrorism, strikes, penetration of employers, union organization and bribery.³ Terrorism keeps the employer in line; it is also remarkably effective in

¹"Strike Record," U. S. News, September 27, 1946, pp. 34-35.

²Carrol R. Daughtery, Labor Problems in American Industry (5th ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1941), p. 404.

³Jack Barbash, The Practice of Unionism (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1956), p. 307.

suppressing all but a few daring souls within the union. Terrorism can take a variety of forms, from personal violence against individuals to hijacking, sabotage, overturned trucks and murder.¹

There are usually two types of labor hoodlums --first, there is the putrid person who just for the sake of corruption in labor gives his life to crime in labor. The second type of labor hoodlum begins as the first in order to gain access into the labor movement. The reflection of these actions points to the labor leader who tolerates this kind of racketeering elements in his union that represents questionable character. All of the hoodlums in the labor field are sitting watchfully to feed upon the well-meaning workers in labor. A real gangster cannot enter into any labor movement unless there is a dishonest labor leader who permits a dishonest person to come in.²

Some corrupt practices that certain local union officials have been found to carry on are the padding of expense accounts to amounts many times their official salaries; the outright embezzlement of union funds; the selling of supplies or real estate to employers or to their unions at exorbitant prices; and taking bribes from employers for sitting on the lid and holding the rank and file from strikes or other employer-disturbing activities. Union grafting is petty compared to certain extortion practices. These are the real racketeering. Extortion is likely to exist when an unscrupulous union leader attains a great deal of power through exercising the rights of his office.³

¹Ibid., p. 307.

²Gus Tyler, The Labor Revolution (New York: Viking Press, 1967), pp. 243-44.

³Daughtery, The Labor Problems of American Society, pp.404-05.

CHAPTER IV

BACKGROUND OF THE TAFT-HARTLEY ACT

In 1947, Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio set out to revise a body of federal labor laws that had been in effect for twelve years. The Wagner Act of 1935 was named for the Democrat from New York, Senator Robert F. Wagner. This act had been declared by labor leaders as "Labor's Magna Carta," and it was politically the most significant single act of Franklin D. Roosevelt's First New Deal. Its basic purpose was to put the strongest protection about labor's right to bargain collectively--that is, to seek through unions and unions' actions what could not be attained by men as individuals.

In the House of Representatives, the Democrats raised the cry that representatives of employer groups, the National Association of Manufacturers in particular, had helped to write the House version of a new anti-labor bill. In charge on the House floor was Representative Fred A. Hartley, Jr., a Republican from New Jersey.¹ Many charges were made against the bill on the floor of the House, in the press and on the radio. It was claimed that a major part of the legislation had been hastily conceived and that insufficient time had been devoted to its consideration.

The major portion of the original Hartley bill dealt with amend-

¹William S. White, The Taft Story (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1954), pp. 66, 73.

ments to the National Labor Relations Act, since most of the causes of labor unrest stemmed from that act. It was quite evident that labor leaders would spare no effort or expense to convince Congress and the country that the legislation was undesirable and unfair to labor. Because of this, the House Committee was forced to work out the details behind closed doors. A certain amount of secrecy was essential because there were many differences of opinion within the committee on legal phraseology and on the best methods of tackling individual problems.¹

The Taft-Hartley Act before Congress

The House Committee began to work out a measure that would be acceptable to the majority of the Republican members of the Committee. After this was done they considered the measure in a committee and gave the minority party members an opportunity to present their amendments in opposition. Then the legislation was taken to the Republican caucus of the House, where further changes were discussed and some adopted. The amended legislation was then considered again by the Committee on Education and Labor. The necessary additional amendments were authorized and the completed bill reported favorably to the House of Representatives.²

The Hartley bill was designed to outlaw the secondary boycott, jurisdictional strike, sympathetic strike and many other practices. Another labor practice that Congress had long sought to deal with was

¹Fred A. Hartley, Our New National Labor Policy (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1948), pp. 49-50.

²Ibid., p. 51.

mass picketing and violence. The other major provisions of the Hartley bill which were considered as legislative proposals included the closed shop ban, the bill of rights for union members, prohibition of unfair labor practices by union members and the extension of the anti-trust laws to cover union activities.

The major provisions of the Hartley bill had been supported by thousands upon thousands of pages of testimony extending back for more than six years, testimony obtained by congressional committees. The Hartley bill required three separate roll calls--one was the rule authorizing the debate, another on a motion to recommit and a third on final passage. The bill passed the House of Representatives on April 17, 1947, by a vote of 308 to 107. The Hartley bill had become The Hartley Act, a change in terminology that indicated approval by one branch of Congress.¹

In the Senate, the control had shifted from Democratic to Republican. The Republican leaders in the Senate had to watch a close margin to maintain their leadership. Many of the Senators who were bitterly opposed to corrective labor legislature in any form had been in the Senate for several years since they had been last elected.

Senator Taft, the Republican chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, had selected the members of his committee so as to have all types of opinions within his party. The Committee included Republican Senators Ball of Minnesota, Smith of New Jersey, Donnell of Missouri, and Jenner of Indiana, and one Democrat, Ellender

¹Ibid., pp. 57, 60, 61.

of Louisiana--all of whom were known to favor corrective legislation more or less in line with the House approved bill.¹

Senators Pepper of Florida and Murray of Montana did not want any labor legislation at all and did all within their power to prevent its enactment. Senator Taft was faced with a real problem. He had drafted a tentative measure for discussion even before his bill had reached the House Floor.

There were four important provisions to be considered of the Taft Bill. The first was designed to protect the workers from coercion from any source and would have effectively prevented the further use of high-handed organizing techniques that had become fashionable in organized labor. A second provision would have restored the principle of self-government to union leaders and locals in conducting their own collective bargaining negotiations with the employers directly concerned. The third provision had established certain rules governing the administration of welfare and other funds. The last major provision eliminated by the Senate Committee from Senator Taft's original measure would have permitted any injured party to seek relief in the courts by applying for an injunction against secondary boycotts and jurisdictional disputes.²

All four had been approved by the Hartley bill. There were several amendments considered by the Senate. The first amendment was bitterly opposed by labor's senators because it was designed to protect

¹Ibid., pp. 63-64.

²Ibid., p. 65.

employers from coercion by union organizers. There were other amendments concerning the problem of industry-wide bargaining and the administration of the welfare funds. The remainder of the Senate debate was devoted to a series of delaying actions on the part of the opposition and to a detailed consideration of the union shop provisions of the Taft bill.¹

Finally, the Senate voted in favor of the Taft bill, 68 to 24. The principal points in the new Taft-Hartley Act were these: the closed shop was forbidden; union shop agreements were made lawful only if a majority of all employees voted for them by secret ballot; jurisdictional strikes and secondary boycotts were made illegal; labor unions might be sued for breach of contract; unfair labor practices for unions as well as employers were defined; in any industry engaged in interstate commerce there must be delay before there could be a lawful strike; unions were required to make their financial affairs public; the eighty-day injunction was provided for in national health-and safety strikes.² The Taft-Hartley Act was one piece of legislation enacted by the 80th Congress that drained the blood from Truman's face.³

President Opposition

President Truman felt that the Taft-Hartley Act was unfair to the working people of the country and that the act abused the right

¹Ibid., pp. 68-69.

²White, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

³Alfred Steinberg, The Life and Times of Harry S. Truman (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), p. 292.

which millions of citizens could enjoy by bargaining with their employers for fair wages and fair working conditions. The bill he thought was deliberately designed to weaken labor unions. Unions existed so that laboring men could bargain with their employers on a basis of equality; they had increased the standards of working people steadily until they had become the highest in the world.

In his view, the law would weaken unions and undermine the national policy of collective bargaining; would take bargaining power away from workers and give more power to management; and would also expose workers to the abuse of labor injunctions. Truman placed emphasis on legislation which would get rid of abuses. Legislation was not needed that would take fundamental rights away from the working people.

It was felt by the President that the bill would open up avenues for many lawsuits issued by employers against unions, unions against employers and employers would regret the formation of any such bill. The bill contained provisions that were not profitable to management.

The provisions of the act would prevent a union newspaper from making statements about persons running in a national election. It was also possible for an incorporated radio network from spending money on the national convention of a political party. Considering these provisions with deep respect, it would be detrimental to free speech and the free press.

Such legislation, continued Truman, might cause the people of the United States to divide into opposing groups. The entire purpose of the bill was contrary to the growth of the national labor policy.

It was the kind of legislation that was needed to correct abuses and to further advances in labor-management relations. The people of the country should seek to treat all men fairly and justly, which will give people security in the necessities of life.¹

In spite of Truman's personal opposition and also his veto, the Congress of the United States passed the bill.

¹Harry S. Truman, Public Papers of The Presidents of the United States, January 1, 20, December 31, 1947 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963).

SUMMARY

Many people felt that government should have shown its power in some of the strikes and imposed compulsory arbitration in the fixing of wages, provided the parties could agree. The manner by which the nationwide strikes were handled was greatly criticized. Nevertheless, the public felt that the right to strike for hours, wages and working conditions in the ultimate analysis is essential to the maintenance of freedom in the United States.

In trying to deal with labor abuses, Congress endeavored to collect all possible testimony as to just what is wrong in the labor field. It had tried to correct secondary boycotts and jurisdictional strikes.

It was trying to restore the balance back to a point where management and labor could deal equally with each other and where they would have approximately equal power. The largest companies could deal on equal terms with their employees throughout the nation but the smaller companies were practically at the mercy of the labor-union bosses. Whatever they had insisted upon, the employers practically had to give to them. Many strikes had been brought about by unreasonable labor demands to which the employer finally felt he could not possibly yield and, at the same time, maintain the integrity and independence of his business.

In general, the law was a reasonable one. If there were to be

free collective bargaining in industry it must be between responsible parties. Some of the provisions of the law dealt with the question of greater responsibility on the part of the unions as well as management.

Labor leaders were not concerned over the specific provisions of the law; they were against any legislation that would, in any way, reduce the power of the labor unions. On the other hand, the President had never publicly recognized that there were labor union abuses. There was nothing in his veto message really recognizing that there were abuses, except a little lip service. His message mentioned elimination of jurisdictional strikes and secondary boycotts but there was never any real recommendation from him to take care of these problems.

So Congress forced the problem of either producing a constructive labor measure, saying to the labor-union leaders, "no, there is no Congress of the United States, there is no President of the United States, who dares to stand up against your power."

In the Taft-Hartley law, the government has changed the situation so that the law recognizes that there are unfair labor practices on the part of employees, just as the Wagner bill had recognized that there were unfair labor practices on the part of employers, in its provisions. They tried to abolish the special privileges conferred by pre-existing legislation and they have based this measure of freedom on contract and on free collective bargaining.

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